
Youth Sunday Sermon – MP Perkins

A sermon by Cathedral senior MP Perkins The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Youth Sunday

Hey, my name is MP, and I am a senior at Lovett. I've been part of our church community for 18 years now. If you know me, you probably know that our youth group is a huge part of my life and has greatly contributed to my development. Until I was old enough to manage my own schedule, my family dragged me to church for every single 8:45 service. We sat right in the front rightttt there just about every Sunday morning. Creatures of habit I guess. While my parents listened to the sermon, which I'm sure was very insightful, I spent my time coloring in a pretty pretty princess book in the pews. Maybe I even scratched my name into the wood a few times. Maybe I didn't. Who knows. I need you guys to know that those early Sunday mornings were never the reason that we came to church. We always came for the people. We found our church in the people we saw here every Sunday morning. For us church was never the magnificently large Cathedral you're sitting in right now. It was the people around us.

My family leaves a very lasting impression on people due to the roaming of my very memorable sister, Jennifer. If you haven't been blessed by Jennifer's presence before, she is one of a kind. Jennifer has a rare mutation called Smith Magenis Syndrome, and it makes her extra unique. Through Jennifer, everyone knew me too. Sometimes it is really hard to love Jennifer; I would know. I grew up with her. But what I love about this church is that they never stopped loving her. It comes to show how people make up the church.

Seeing this loyalty is what led me to our youth group. Even though I had been here for 12 years, I don't think I really felt like I belonged to the church until I joined our youth group. I started coming to Bible studies in seventh grade because my older brother, Chase, had been going every week, and everything he did was the coolest thing in my mind. So off I went to Bible studies, Sunday School, and any other youth group event I could get my hands on. Chase graduated that year, but church stuck with me. I loved listening to the high schoolers who seemed to know everything about everything, and I was beginning to form friendships with the middle schoolers who frequented youth group. I would say that this was the beginning of my faith journey, but even though I was practically obsessed with youth group, I felt like I was only going through the motions. I didn't really understand why everyone was so excited about this thing called faith.

It went like this until I was confirmed here. Out of the entire confirmation class, only one thing really stood out to me. My good friend, Kit Kat Zip Zap, formally known as Canon Cathy Zappa, explained how faith is not certainty. In fact, certainty is the opposite of faith. Something there really resonated with me; religion to me had always been something that people had blind faith in. It was a relationship with God that never ever faltered. Cathy talked about how it is a-ok to have doubts and ask questions. She also explained that everyone's relationship with God is different, and everyone feels his love in a different way. I wasn't yet sure how or where I felt God, but I really wanted to figure it out.

Shortly after this, I went to my first diocesan event knowing no one but my friend Rebie. It was all very new to me. Rebie and I knew none of the songs, and honestly I could tell you that we had a definite culture shock when we were there. We came with no expectations and were absolutely blown away by the love and friendships that we experienced. The only thing I remember is the feeling of unconditional love that overtook me during the weekend and the following weeks. I finally started to understand that I saw God through people and the love that they shared.

Again, I became severely attached to this new community and went to everything that I could. I even did my best to bring the love I felt in the diocese back to our own youth group. Then COVID happened. I'm sure everyone here can relate that they felt detached from our church at some point during quarantine, and my recent discovery of feeling God through others was basically put on hold. I'd like to say that I attended all of the

online youth events that our leaders worked so hard to put on, but online church just wasn't giving me the connections I really needed. I didn't feel God at all during COVID, and even when everything was back on, I still didn't really feel anything.

I stayed away from church events for a bit and made myself as busy as possible so that I didn't have to think about the questions and doubts that I had about God. An existential crisis is really not what I wanted to have during my busiest year of high school. I know a lot of my friends can remember me saying things like "I don't know if I believe in God" or "maybe I'm agnostic, who knows." It was a very weird time for me. I started trying to come back to youth events senior year because I missed all of my friends here. Whether I was religious or not, they were still a huge part of my life. Again, I was just running through the motions, but this time, I noticed that I could be honest with others about it. I was honest with my friends in youth group and my youth leaders about doubts I was having. And they were totally okay with it. No one criticized me or told me that I wasn't welcome in the church. Most people even told me that they had gone through something similar or that it was completely normal to feel like that.

Today I would say that my faith is stronger than it ever has been, because God really stuck with me even when I wasn't seeing him. I still have a lot to learn and am only at the beginning of my journey, but I know that it's okay to ask questions and have doubts. As I was writing this and reflecting on my time here at the Cathedral, one thing that was very clear to me was that growing your faith and relationship with God takes a lifetime, and going through the highs and lows is just a part of it. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to grow up here and I want to thank our youth ministry for giving me a group of friends who never left me in my times of doubt and loved me for who I was.

Oh and by the way... Go Jackets!

Thank You